



Carers Australia Submission:

Topics for the 2021 Census

June 2018

AN AUSTRALIA THAT VALUES AND SUPPORTS ALL CARERS

ABOUT CARERS AUSTRALIA

Carers Australia is the national peak body representing the diversity of Australians who provide unpaid care and support to family members and friends with a:

- disability
- chronic condition
- mental illness or disorder
- drug or alcohol problem
- terminal illness
- or who are frail aged

Carers Australia believes all carers, regardless of their cultural and linguistic differences, age, disability, religion, socioeconomic status, gender identification and geographical location should have the same rights, choices and opportunities as other Australians.

They should be able to enjoy optimum health, social and economic wellbeing and participate in family, social and community life, employment and education.

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INTRODUCTION

Understanding the characteristics and demographics of carers through the Census data has given Carers Australia an invaluable tool in advocating for carers. It has helped governments and services understand the extent of caring for people with disability, health condition and/or conditions/problems relating to old age by their relatives throughout the population. It has also provided a greater understanding of specific cohorts, for example young carers, that has the potential to lead to improved services and more targeted services.

Carers Australia considers that the question identifying unpaid care to family members or others be retained in the 2021 Census. As this would be a continuing Census question, only the relevant criteria have been addressed in this submission.

TOPIC OF NATIONAL IMPORTANCE AND NEED FOR WHOLE POPULATION DATA

Caring continues to be a topic of major national importance as the informal care provided by unpaid family and other carers fulfils a major economic and social function in Australia that is expected to increase in value in the future, particularly due to an ageing population, and government policies encouraging deinstitutionalisation of people of all ages requiring treatment, care and support and the increasing preference of people with needs for care and support to live in their own homes.

As well as the population as a whole, Census data is used to target provision of carer services. For example, state and territory Carer Associations, state and territory governments, local governments, and regional planning authorities use data at Statistical Local Areas (SLAs) for planning, directing and evaluating services for carers.

While data from the Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers is invaluable to this organisation for other purposes, it does not have the detail needed for accurate and comprehensive planning at local and regional levels, and the survey is not undertaken at all in remote communities. As well, because the research is from a sample, rather than a census, many cell sizes are too small to be able to generalise data to populations, particularly in some locations. For example, SDAC cannot be used for analysis of cultural and linguistic diversity or Indigenous status.

In addition, household Census data on care provision can be readily compared with need for help with self care, body movement and communication activities that is also collected.

CONTINUING NEED FOR DATA

There is continuing need for data to support service provision for carers. It is likely that the Commonwealth Government's recently announced funding for Integrated Carer Support Services (the ICSS), will have an ongoing need for nationwide data, as will other organisations advocating on behalf of carers and/or directly providing services to carers and people with care needs, including:

- Carers Australia advocating for carers' needs nationally
- state and territory Carer Associations offering advocacy and targeted services in their jurisdictions
- the many organisations that provide local services to carers and people with care needs
- the many organisations that support people with specific illnesses and conditions (such as dementia, motor neurone disease, etc) and their carers.

The size and nature of caring, as well as the types of location of services, is changing dramatically. Retaining the question identifying carers enables comparison to identify the changing size, nature and demographics of carers and caring activities in Australia.

RECOMMENDATION

Carers Australia recommends that the question on unpaid care, help or assistance be retained in the 2021 Census.